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This production of *LINES* brings a new energy in the form of musical experimentation as well. Though the first *LINES* also included a percussive soundscape, playing with Theo Ndawillie II of Vox Vidora and David Fuentes' rhythms allows for another angle to the piece's physical expression. In performance, the music gives a place other than the script to begin with, another surface to play off of and explore.

Without speaking a single line, it supports the actors, lifting them up so that they can communicate on an entirely different level.

"We must be speaking with, not just speaking to. In hearing responses, we come to understand whether our words lead to resist, to transform, to move."

-bell hooks

In selecting what interviews to use for the new script, we were forced to cut a good deal of material that was important, but unessential to the artistic whole of the work. What we have attempted to present here is a representative sample of race relations around the city. But there were many voices we were unable to include. Some have yet to be heard.

None of the voices represented here are intended to be authoritative. If there is a message in *LINES*, the first is that something is wrong. But the second is that pinpointing a solution is a matter of enormous complexity. The lines that we reveal here are limited, because race relations and systematic disenfranchisement are both cultural and personal. They occur on both an individual and statistical level, and while both interact, they do not automatically confirm one another. Contradictions occur; they are even welcome. No doubt audience members will leave with more questions than answers.

We encourage you to make those questions heard. Join the throng of voices onstage, and cropping up beside you. Only fully voiced in this way can this production end with any real impact. Only by crossing over this first line of the vulnerability of our own thoughts and positions can the rest be bent, broken or dissolved entirely.

You are where we find no lines.

Dramaturg | Dan Christmann

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PRESENTS





THE CAST

Alex Cook

Darius "T.Q." Colquitt

Gulsharin Dubash

Rena Hamstra Dam

Julianne Howe-Bouwens

Sharon Suh

THE CREW

Conceived and Directed by Stephanie Sandberg

Technical Director/Lighting Design- David Zeyl

Assistant Director/Stage Manager- Jeanne Peake

Assistant Stage Manager- Brynn Mitchell

Co-Composers- David Fuentes and Theo Ndwallie II

Costume Designer- Tricia Bayfield

Projectionist/Sound Mixer- Aiden DeJong

Dramaturg- Dan Christmann

Percussionist- Theo Ndwallie II

"Art hurts. Art urges voyages - and it's easier to stay home.

-Gwendolyn Brooks

This play is about lines. A simple statement. But very rarely is anything so simple, if you see it hard enough. Obviousness is often an easy façade for a lack of interest in true complexity.

One of the more salient features of *LINES*, both the play that you'll see tonight and the concept of a line itself, is that they refer to multiple things with similar attributes – boundaries; physical and mental, institutional and social. They can even refer to color lines drawn on the maps of the Roosevelt era Federal Housing Administration that coded neighborhoods in Grand Rapids based on the color or race of the people living there.

LINES: The Lived Experience of Race is also a multifaceted phenomenon. First performed six years ago at Actors' Theater, Grand Rapids, the production focused on a microscope's view of Grand Rapids, with emphasis on the southeast side of the petri dish. Using transcripts of 17 interviews with people in our community, it attempted to delineate a conversation about inequality and systematic injustice.

Six years after its original debut, some may be wondering, why *LINES*? Why have we had this conversation again?

The answer is that the lines in this city warp. Since the original production in 2010, race relations have altered dramatically in America, especially with the national spotlight throwing the lives of young black men by white police forces into light. While this is not a new conversation, the issues contained in the play have renewed vitality, and a further impetus to be heard.

Race lines warp with time, and so must the theatre.

Reflecting the space of five or six years, one of the first things Stephanie and I did was to update the text of the original play. She added new voices, re-interviewing many of the original characters while I dove into the updated world of statistics, of income disparity and collected new data. Because of its focused location, the original play contained few Hispanic or Latino voices. Native Americans, and Native Americans, too, were left out. In the editing process, we have attempted to create a more robust picture of the community, less grounded in location, and more polyphonic voices clamoring to be heard throughout the community. The Wealthy Street still features prominently, but it is only one aspect of an issue whose repercussions can be felt again and again throughout the city.

We also found a change in the performance structure was necessary to fit with the revised script. In staging, the first iteration of *LINES* was static; excerpts from different interviews were performed together and presented in a hyper-realistic style that was designed to quickly differentiate characters. While the acting style, necessary for anyone trying to play 10-13 characters in a space of an hour and a half, is similar, we have altered the stage picture to accommodate more choreographed, dynamic movement. This mirrors the differences in the text, its focus, its muscular variation between systematic injustices, and the increasing tension between rich and poor, between Caucasians and people of color.

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